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61 KILLED IN TALIBAN SUICIDE BOMB ATTACK IN PAK MOSQUE

The blast during afternoon prayers in the high-security zone in Peshawar left over 150 people, most of them policemen, injured

IT'S A REVENGE ATTACK, SAYS PAK TALIBAN

The blast occurred inside the mosque around 1.40 pm when the bomber, who was present in the front row, blew himself up. Sarbakaf Mohmand, a commander of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), or Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility for the attack on Twitter. He said the bombing was part of a revenge attack for his brother, who was killed last August in Afghanistan

OUTFIT KNOWN FOR TARGETING FORCES

- TTP has carried out a number of suicide attacks in the past, targeting security personnel. In 2014, it stormed the Army Public School in Peshawar, killing 150 people, including 131 students
- The outfit had threatened to carry out a series of attacks after ending its ceasefire with the Shehbaz Sharif govt last year | P12

400

ESTIMATED NO. OF POLICEMEN IN THE MOSQUE WHEN THE BLAST TOOK PLACE

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi (second-left) with CPI's D Raja (from left), National Conference's Omar Abdullah, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti and others, during a public rally at the end of his 145-day Bharat Jodo Yatra amid heavy snowfall, in Srinagar on Monday | PTI

POLL-BOUND K'TAKA EXPECTS BIG FROM UNION BUDGET TOMORROW

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

POLL-bound Karnataka has high expectations from the Union Budget which will be presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, her fifth, on Wednesday. The Union Budget is being presented just three weeks before the State Budget which will be presented by Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on February 17. Expectations are high also because Sitharaman is a Rajya Sabha member from Karnataka.

Speaking to The New Indian Express, Prof Sandeep Shastri, political analyst said Karnataka can expect big as the state is going to polls. This is normal as the Union government treats or announces special allocations for poll-bound states. Karnataka will get a "special treatment" in the Union Budget, he said.

Prof Shastri said that the Union Budget is likely to focus on infrastructure development with more stress on Bengaluru and it will also have a pro-poor stamp to woo voters.

A senior leader from the BJP in Karnataka said, there is pressure on the state as well as Central party leaders to do well in the polls. "The Union Budget will definitely have big announcements for Karnataka. In previous years, there were good allocations for West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and other states that were going to polls then. If we do not make big offers to the state, it will give ammo to the opposition parties to target us," he said.

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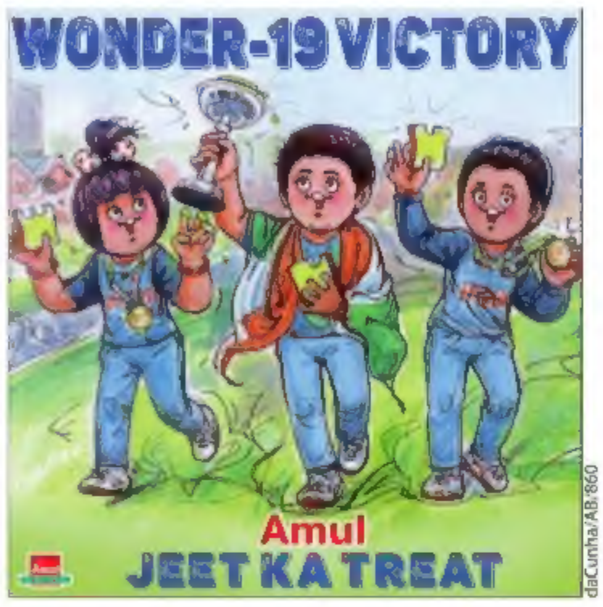

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Aimed to save liberal, secular ethos: Rahul

Call to end J&K violence as yatra concludes

FAYAZ WANI @ Srinagar

CONGRESS leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday said the aim of his 4,000 km long Bharat Jodo Yatra was to save the liberal and secular ethos of India.

Addressing a rally here to mark the end of the yatra, he called for the end of violence in the Valley, saying phone calls announcing deaths of loved ones — whether of a soldier, a CRPF jawan or any Kashmiri, should stop. "No child, mother, son or any other family member should take this phone call. My aim is to stop this call," he said.

Striking a bond with Kashmiris, he said they gave him hearts full of love and not hand grenades, adding no BJP leader can walk like he did, as they are scared.

"I have not done this yatra for Congress but for the country. Our aim is to stand against the ideology that wants to destroy foundation of this country. We should stand united with love and affection against them," Rahul said.

Amid heavy snowfall, Rahul said while the BJP has shown a path of politics, the Congress wants to show the country a different route — of dignity, love and affection. *"Nafrat ke bazaar mein mohabbat ki dukan kholne ki koshish ki hai* (attempted to open a shop of love in a market of hatred."

Rahul said he was warned that if he walked in Kashmir, he could be attacked. "However, I thought those who hate me, let me give them an opportunity to change the colour of my white T-shirt to red...Kashmiri people did not give me a hand grenade but gave me love and warmth," he said.

The rally was meant to be a show of strength for the Opposition, but many leaders could not make it due to adverse weather and most locals chose to say indoors.

Apart from the Congress leaders, Farooq and Omar Abdullah of National Conference, Mehbooba Mufti of PDP, D Raja of CPI, RSP's Premchandran, and leaders from DMK, JMM, BSP, VCK and IUML participated in the rally.

'End these phone calls'

Rahul said, "I can understand the pain of Kashmiris as I have seen the violence." He recalled when he was informed about the killing of his grandma (Indira) and dad (Rajiv) over phone, adding he wanted to end such calls

GUJ COURT CONVICTS ASARAM IN 2ND RAPE CASE

DILIP SINGH KSHATRIYA @ Ahmedabad

THE Gandhinagar sessions court on Monday convicted self-styled godman Asaram in a rape case filed by a Surat-based woman in 2013. The quantum of sentence is likely to be pronounced on Tuesday.

Sessions court judge D K Soni acquitted six other accused, including Asaram's wife Laxmiben, their daughter, and four disciples who were accused of aiding and abetting the crime, for want of evidence.

Asaram's lawyer said his client will challenge the order in the Gujarat High Court.

The complainant, one of Asaram's former devotees, accused the influential spiritual leader of raping her on several occasions between 1997 and 2006 when she was staying at his ashram at Motera.

Special public prosecutor R C Kodekar and public prosecutor Sunil Pandya told the media that they will try to get maximum punishment for the accused.

Notably, the complainant's younger sister had accused Asaram's son, Narayan Sai, of sexually exploiting her when she was staying in Asaram's Jahangirpura ashram in Surat between 2002 and 2005. Sai, too, was booked for rape and has been awarded life imprisonment by a Surat court.

The 81-year-old godman is currently serving a life sentence in a Jodhpur jail for raping a minor girl at his ashram in Rajasthan in 2013. His two accomplices were sentenced to 20 years in jail by the court in the same case for their roles.

No policy on ChatGPT misuse yet: Minister

BUKKA EVA @ Bengaluru

IN wake of some private universities banning Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer (ChatGPT) over reports of its alleged misuse by students, Higher Education and IT/BT Minister Dr CN Ashwath Narayan said the government needs more time to assess the role of ChatGPT in higher educational institutions.

ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence (AI) platform developed by OpenAI, an American AI research lab. While the platform, launched in November 2022, is meant to mimic human conversation through text, controversy has erupted over its use as there have been reports of students taking advantage of the bot to auto-generate essays and assignments for school and college.

SURPRISE CHECKS

RV University issued a notice to its students, banning the use of ChatGPT. According to the university, the usage of the platform is banned and surprise checks would be carried out to ensure that students were not using it

Speaking to *The New Indian Express*, Ashwath Narayan said, "ChatGPT is a relatively new concept. We need time to consider the issues surrounding it and how to deal with them."

Pradeep P, Commissioner, Department of Collegiate and Technical Education, said, "So far, there are no plans to implement a policy on ChatGPT. While the department has heard of the platform, there is no discussion taking place regarding it as of now," he told *The New Indian Express*.

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EXPRESS READ

K'taka eyes making Tulu second official language

BENGALURU: The Karnataka government is making an attempt to announce Tulu as the second official language of the state. With this move, the long-pending demand of the Tulu-speaking population is expected to come true. Meanwhile, a committee has been constituted to look into this plan. P4

Mamata accords Z+ security to Amartya Sen

BOLPUR (WB): Amid allegations of "unauthorised occupation" against Nobel laureate Amartya Sen by Visva-Bharati, West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee on Monday handed land documents to him, asserting that "no one can question him" in future. She also said that Sen would be accorded 'Z+ category' security. P10

ADANI FPO

GETS JUST 4% RETAIL SUBSCRIPTION

Its public subscription remained muted though Abu Dhabi's International Holding Company said it has confidence in the group that saw a $70-bn rout in market value in just three days | P13

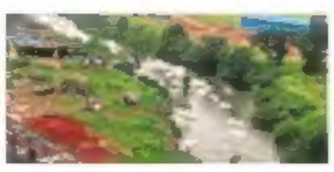
WATER WEALTH

Ecological, economic value of water bodies in state is ₹7.32 lakh crore

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

A recent study by the researchers from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) - Bengaluru, shows that the worth of the entire wetland ecosystem in Karnataka is Rs 7.32 lakh crore (7,320.6 billion), which is gradually being lost to various development works.

The report titled 'Accounting of Ecosystem Services of Wetlands in Karnataka state, India' states that the ecological value of water bodies in Bengaluru, ranges from Rs 10,000 to Rs 55 lakh per hectare per day, depending on the water body and its utilisation.



The report stresses on the need for conservation of the ecosystems through sustainable management tenets. Researchers in the report said that it requires an understanding of the livelihood support of ecosystems.

Prof TV Ramachandra from Centre for Ecological Sciences, IISc, co-author of the report, told *TNIE* that values have been assessed based on the services provided, the protection it has and its utilisation. He said that it is important for the government to understand the value of the ecosystem while accounting the budget. Its inclusion in the GDP is also important, as this is the only way to preserve the water bodies. The focus of the study was to understand the worth of wetlands through the accounting of provisioning, regulating and cultural services. The provisioning services accounted for the tangible benefits (including fish, fodder and water) considering the residual values indicated an annual revenue of Rs 49.70 billion. CONTINUED ON: P5

It is important for the government to understand the value of the ecosystem while accounting the budget. Its inclusion in GDP is important, as this is the only way to preserve water bodies, which not only help fishermen, but also the ecosystem

Professor TV Ramachandra, IISc researcher